Compassion and Creativity at Center Stage of BCHS' Talented Brooklyn Gala

On Wednesday, May 18, Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) hosted *Talented Brooklyn*, a gala celebration of the agency’s life-saving work to end homelessness in Brooklyn. Many generous and compassionate friends contributed over $110,000 to the event, which netted more than $83,000 in unrestricted funds for BCHS’ programs.

The rain outside did not dampen the warmth and enthusiasm inside DUMBO’s Galapagos Art Space, where 200 attendees gathered for *Talented Brooklyn*. Guests joined BCHS in celebrating the agency’s community partners, Board Members and employees who work diligently to help hundreds of women, children and men move from crisis and homelessness to community and independence each year.

"This year we were thrilled to honor three individuals who have done much to help improve the lives of Brooklynnites" says Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. "Martin Dunn’s buildings for formerly homeless individuals have led the industry in supportive housing development; Ron Moelis has been one of the nation’s most innovative developers of affordable and mixed-use housing for more than two decades; and Elizabeth DiMichele’s pro-bono legal counsel has helped BCHS for many years."

The Gala Planning Committee, led by Co-Chairs Margie Hansens and Christine Spadaro, treated guests to a night of fun and artistic expression. Highlights included the 3rd Annual BCHS Resident Art Show, jazz music by the Parker McAllister Quartet, and a rousing performance by Jamal Jackson Dance Company.

The *Talented Brooklyn* theme was represented throughout the event, from gourmet twists on Brooklyn favorites like hot dogs, pizza and cheese cake to a proclamation from Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. Auction items included a private curator-led tour at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); tickets to "Jerusalem" on Broadway, the Daily Show with Jon Stewart, and other exciting shows; paintings and hand-blown glass works by Brooklyn artists; a one-week vacation in Rome, Italy; a weekend getaway in upstate New York; dinner at the legendary Rao’s New York and several Brooklyn restaurants; vineyard and distillery tours and tastings; sports memorabilia and tickets; wine baskets; and much more.

Thanks to all of the generous and compassionate sponsors, honorees, Board and Committee Members, donors and friends who helped make *Talented Brooklyn* a huge success!

See inside for more *Talented Brooklyn*.
Dear friends,

For years BCHS received calls from people all over Brooklyn who were afraid they were going to lose their housing; sometimes the calls were from relatives or friends. “I don’t know where else to go,” they would say. “I have nowhere else to turn.”

I remember one heartbreaking call from a woman whose father had an untreated mental illness. Holding back tears, she told me that his Social Security income was no longer enough to cover a recent rent increase and that he was being evicted from his apartment of 30 years.

It is because of these calls that BCHS - thanks to the generous support of the Oak Foundation - developed the new Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC) demonstration initiative. As you will see in this issue of Community Notes, the BHAC is designed to identify individuals in crisis before they become homeless. By helping them address the problems that are putting them at risk, the BHAC will help participants maintain their housing or find alternative housing, and avoid ever ending up on the street or in a shelter.

Also in this issue of Community Notes you will see highlights from our terrific Talented Brooklyn gala. A great thank you to our wonderful honorees, Martin Dunn, Ron Moels and Elizabeth DiMichele, and all of our extraordinarily generous sponsors, guests and supporters. The evening featured performances by dynamic Brooklyn-based entertainers as well as a gallery of beautiful art work created by talented BCHS residents.

Perhaps BCHS’ activities this Spring are best summarized by an old proverb: “Share a burden and you have half a burden, share a joy and you have two joys.” For me these words always seem to exemplify what is best, and most essential, about community.

I hope you have a wonderful summer. Thank you so much for your support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

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**Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC) Begins Homelessness Prevention Effort**

In March 2011, BCHS launched its Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC), a unique program that assists individuals who are facing a crisis that is jeopardizing their housing. The goal is to ensure that participants never end up on the street or in a shelter. The BHAC works in two ways: 1) Prevention for new clients at imminent risk of becoming homeless, and 2) Aftercare for former BCHS residents.

**BHAC Prevention** focuses on single adult males in Brooklyn—a population identified as facing the greatest risk of becoming homeless—who can provide proof that they are in danger of losing their housing within 60 days. A case manager works with clients to resolve the problems putting them at risk, connects them to helpful services from partner organizations, and if necessary, assists them in finding alternative housing.

**BHAC Aftercare** prevents a recurrence of homelessness among former BCHS residents who are facing a significant setback that is putting them at risk of losing their housing. An Aftercare case manager provides comprehensive assistance to help resolve the immediate crisis, including tenant-landlord mediation, a 24-hour hotline, legal assistance, and more. BHAC Aftercare also assists current BCHS residents who are graduating to independent living, providing extra help to ensure their successful transition.

“This program is essential and timely,” says Director Marie Degraff-Myal. “We believe it will help many Brooklyn residents avoid homelessness and remain in stable independent housing.”

Below: Prevention Case Manager Adriana Arana, Aftercare Case Manager Kiteasha Barnes, Assistant Executive Director Wendy Junious and Program Director Marie Degraff-Myal
Volunteers Dig In for BCHS’ Spring 2011 Gardening Day

On Saturday, May 7, more than 25 volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks and Party4aCause joined BCHS staff and residents for a day of planting, mulching and beautifying at Brooklyn Gardens. The group rolled up their sleeves and planted more than 100 annuals, perennials and shrubs in the courtyard and flower beds at BCHS’ three-building apartment complex for formerly homeless women, children and men.

Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky thanked volunteers for contributing their time and hard work for the project. "The courtyard at Brooklyn Gardens is a calm and happy gathering place for our residents. Your efforts in the garden make the grounds even more welcoming."

Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks volunteers have helped with BCHS Gardening Days for five years. We are extremely grateful for their support and generous commitment to helping BCHS end homelessness in Brooklyn. Thanks also to the wonderful and dedicated volunteers from Party4aCause.

Below: (back row) BCHS staff and residents, volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks; (front row) volunteers from Party4aCause

Photos by Jessica Rosen

Party4aCause Serves Up Philanthropy and Fun to Help BCHS

It wasn’t your ordinary black-tie charity event! On Saturday, March 5, more than 100 young professionals gathered at the Public House in Manhattan to enjoy a night of fun and excitement to benefit BCHS. The James Bond-themed event, presented by Party4aCause, raised $2,000 to help end homelessness in Brooklyn.

Party4aCause is an organization led by a group of young, active New York City professionals dedicated to supporting the local community through social fundraising events and bringing others closer to the cause. Since its founding in 2006, Party4aCause has raised over $12,000 for charitable partners throughout the New York City community.

"We are honored that Party4aCause chose BCHS as the beneficiary for their event," said Board Vice-Chairman Tim Hosking. "They are a fun group of individuals who are clearly committed to making a positive difference in our community."


Left to right: Takshin Bhat, Party4aCause President Jon Sukarangsan; BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky; and Bentley Ng

Photo by Marina Vitebsky
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Above (from top down, left to right):  
Brooklyn Borough President’s Office Representative Nan Blackshear,  
BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, and BCHS Board Chair Ben Baxt  
BCHS Resident Artists Ezekial Cohen, Hilde Freedom and Paulette Rogers  
Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, Honorees Martin Dunn, Elizabeth DiMichele and Ron Moelis, and Board Chair Ben Baxt

Below (left to right):  
Jessica Ziegler and BCHS Board Member La Andrews  
Emcee Lu Celania Sierra  
BCHS Staff Members Brian Kelly and Quana Waters  
ElenaFeliciano and BCHS Board Member Peter Hansen

Photos by Robert Braunfeld
THE 3RD ANNUAL BCHS RESIDENT ART SHOW

In 2009 BCHS hosted its First Annual Resident Art Show to showcase artistic works by talented residents from our programs for formerly homeless women, children and men. The annual show highlights the artists’ diverse visions, skills and experiences, and it celebrates each one’s unique talents.

Some of our residents have long-standing relationships with art, both recreationally and professionally. Others developed their creative voices more recently, during their journeys from crisis and homelessness to community and independence. All of them share one strong common bond – the feeling of freedom, joy and satisfaction they gain from creating art.

Through our Resident Art Show, BCHS encourages and nurtures the therapeutic value and self-expression that art provides for our residents. And through a vibrant activities program that includes weekly art sessions, we give each resident the opportunity to explore the possibilities and benefits that art can offer them.

We thank the BCHS resident artists for allowing us to share their highly personal works at Talented Brooklyn.

A WEEK IN MY LIFE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY BCHS RESIDENTS

This year’s Resident Art Show also featured a special collection of photos captured for a voluntary project we call “A Week In My Life.” The agency provided disposable cameras to participants and asked them to document their experiences, communities, and perspectives during a single week. The resulting images range from stark to scenic, and from static to vibrant. We thank the following residents for allowing us these honest glimpses into their day-to-day routines and ongoing journeys from crisis to community.

Stacy Adams (Ivy House)  Deanna Patterson (Arbor Inn)
Robine Blue (Arbor Inn)  Roderick Pixley (Oak Hall)
Jenny Chan (Scattered-Site)  Paulette Rogers (Scattered-Site)
Ezekial Cohen (Scattered-Site)  Qiana Thompson (Arbor Inn)
Shonda Glover (Scattered-Site)  Fred Turbee (Oak Hall)

2011 BCHS RESIDENT ARTISTS

Left to right: Jenny Chan  Jerry Foust  Hilde Freedom
Barry McCrea  Lindora Slowe
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Pfizer Foundation Matching Gift Program
Brooklyn Students Deliver Special Donations to Moms and Kids at Arbor Inn

On April 15, a group of fourth graders from Community Roots Charter School (CRCS) delivered a special batch of donations to Arbor Inn, BCHS’ program for single mothers with children. The ten students are participants in CRCS’ Learning through Service & Action (LSA) after school program. Through the program, they explored ideas around serving their community and planned related projects, including a collection drive to help homeless people in Brooklyn.

The team collected diapers, baby food, and toys from throughout the entire CRCS community and donated the items to two Fort Greene family shelters, including Arbor Inn. We are extremely grateful for the thoughtfulness and hard work of these remarkable students, and we deeply appreciate the generosity of everyone from CRCS who contributed to their collection drive.

We’re committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn. Each year, BCHS provides safe and clean supportive housing for 700 formerly homeless women, children and men. We help them learn how to live productively and independently, with dignity and with hope.

To contribute, or to learn how you can help, please visit www.BCHandS.org or contact BCHS' Development Department at (718) 852-9322 ext. 2140
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